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C O N F I D E N T I A L WINDHOEK 000291

SIPDIS

FOR IO/RHS REBECCA JOVIN AND DRL/MLGA LYNN SICADE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2018

TAGS: PHUM PREL UN WA

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA'S RESPONSE TO UNGA HR RESOLUTIONS

REF: STATE 093981

Classified By: DCM Matt Harrington for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Emboff met with the Namibian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director of Multilateral Affairs Julius Zaya Shiweva and delivered reftel demarche on September 15. Shiweva stated that Namibia would, in all likelihood, vote on the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee Human Rights Resolutions as it had in the past. (Note: Namibia last year voted in favor of the no-action motions for the country specific resolutions on Burma, DPRK, and Iran, and abstained on the resolutions themselves. End Note.) Shiweva explained that Namibia favors "persuasion" and "dialogue" rather than country-specific resolutions.

¶2. (C) Shiweva was not aware of possible thematic resolutions on freedom of expression, defamation of religion, or prisoners of conscience. On freedom of expression, Shiweva noted that the Namibian constitution guarantees this right and that Namibians exercise free speech without any constraints. Shiweva did note that many Namibians "have concerns over free use of hate speech." (Note: As stated in our 2007 Human Rights Report, the Namibian government does generally respect the constitutionally protected rights of freedom of speech and the press. End Note). Shiweva stated that Namibia would likely not support a defamation of religion resolution that focused primarily on Islam.
(Comment: However, given the fact that Shiweva was unaware of the possibility of an anti-defamation resolution, his statement should not be construed as an official government position.)

¶3. (C) In a separate meeting on September 12, DCM delivered the same talking points in a call on MFA Permanent Secretary Veiccoh Nghiwete, who was joined by his Head of Bilateral Affairs, Wilbard Hellao. Nghiwete said Namibia had not yet decided on the approach it would take on many of the topics we had raised, and he encouraged us to follow up with the MFA's multilateral affairs department.

¶4. (C) Comment: We made a very strong pitch in both meetings against no-action motions, but our interlocutors did not appear to be swayed. As Shiweva indicated, the GRN is generally uncomfortable with country-specific resolutions and abstained last year on the Burma, DPRK, and Iran resolutions. Although we will continue to press Namibia to cast a vote in favor of our target country-specific resolutions this year, abstentions may once again be the best outcome we can expect.
End Comment.

MATHIEU